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# CATALAN IN FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES



FREDERIC AMAT. *ESTUDI A 407 GREENWICH STREET*. 1981. NEW YORK

THE CATALAN TEACHERS EXILED AFTER 1939 MANAGED TO STIMULATE INTEREST IN THE CATALAN LANGUAGE AT FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES. TODAY, THIS INTEREST IS BACKED UP AND REINFORCED FROM CATALONIA.

JOAN COLOMINES | PUIG COMMISSAR FOR EXTERIOR PROMOTION OF CATALAN

**S**tudies of Catalan language, culture and civilization go back a long way in foreign universities and in the world's scientific community. The solidity of Ramon Llull of Mallorca, of Arnau de Vilanova of Valencia and of Francesc Eiximenis of Gi-

rona underlies the foundations of the edifice which in time was to occupy scholars all over the world, probably also drawn by the phenomenon of the language, culture and civilization of a small country which in the course of its history, in spite of losing its institution-

al sovereignty, maintained the steadfast determination to survive as a nation.

The Catalan language has been defended, on the one hand simply and naturally, preserving it as the language of society –often reduced to the family cir-





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cle-, and on the other by building up, through work, seriousness and sacrifice, a cultural and scientific corpus endorsed in recent times by such prestigious names as Mercè Rodoreda, Salvador Espriu, Pere Calders and Joan Coromines, who have continued to draw the attention of the world's scholars.

For many years it was these scholars who promoted the knowledge of Catalan at universities outside our little country. The great majority belonged to a general movement known as the *Catalanística* and were affiliated to organisations such as the Anglo-Catalan Society, the Deutsch Katalanische Gesellschaft, the Associazione Italiana di Studi Catalani, the Association Française de Catalanistes and the International Association of Catalan Language and Literature, which is based in Catalonia but which declares itself international as its founding meeting was held in Copenhagen in 1968, at the height of the Franco dictatorship, and it was officially constituted in Cambridge in 1973.

A further element to bear in mind as regards the presence of Catalan in foreign universities are the exiled Catalan teachers who settled there after 1939 and managed to stimulate interest in the Catalan language. It is this interest which we in Catalonia try, to the best of our possibilities, to keep up.

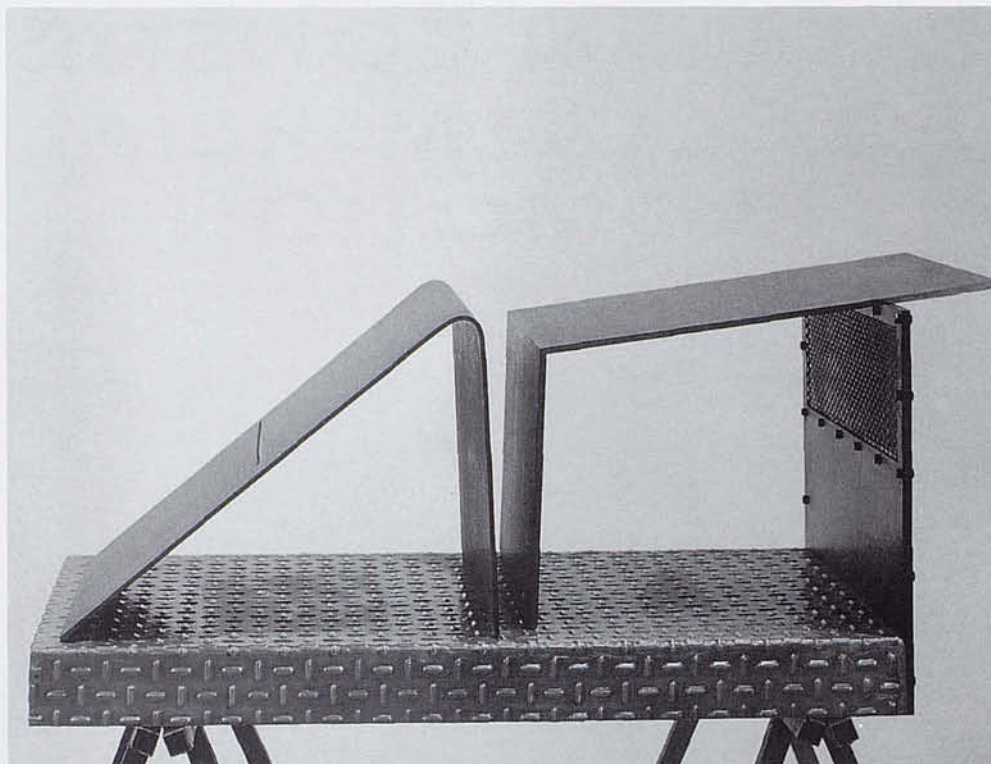
In 1985, in the Catalan Parliament—constituted in 1980 and heir to the Catalan Courts (1218-1706) and the Parliament reinstated during the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1939)—, as President of the Commission for Cultural Policy, I signed a resolution which led to the creation of the Commission for the Promotion of the Teaching of Catalan in universities outside the Catalan territorial ambit, known as the Readerships Commission. This Commission—initially made up of representatives of the Interuniversity Council of Catalonia, the director general and sub-director for Universities, the director for Linguistic Policy, the head of the Linguistic Advice Service and the direc-

tor of the Catalan Consortium for the Exterior Promotion of Culture (COPEC), one secretary and one president—was in 1993 joined by official representatives from the universities of Valencia, Castelló, Alacant and the Balearic Isles to form a Joint Committee for information and debate.

Work got under way in the 1987-88 academic year and since then the number of readerships in foreign universities has grown steadily: 8 in 87-88, 16 in 88-89, 22 in 89-90, 23 in 90-91, 39 in 91-92, 56 in 92-93, 57 in 93-94 and 61 in 94-95 in the following countries: Germany (18), Great Britain (14), France (7), Italy (5), Poland (3), Russia (2) and one each in Portugal, Belgium, Denmark, Holland, Hungary, Finland, Romania, USA, Canada, Australia, Mexico and Argentina.

There are at present various types of readership on offer: full-time, chosen by examination, with readers sent by the Commission, and with expenses shared equally by the universities; part-time,





AGUSTÍ ROQUÉ. STAHL. 1991 BRENTANO

with readers or lecturers from the place of application, which at present involve no additional expense for the universities; the Catalan/Castilian mixed readerships included in the cultural agreements of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and the doctorate readerships for research or post-graduate studies, following an agreement with the universities on work and expenses.

These are the agreements under the academic control of the Commission, but because of the tradition in certain universities, the school of *Catalanística*, and universities that have foregone the commission's tutelage, between 1987 and 1994 some fifty universities have been operating on their own behalf: 9 in Germany, 8 in the USA, 5 in Great Britain, 4 in Italy, 3 in France, 3 in Canada and one each in Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, Hungary, Ireland, Norway, the Czech republic, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Japan, China, Korea, Slovenia and Australia. To this we can add the nine German Wolskshochschu-

le and the 27 Catalan Centres which often work in co-ordination with the readers. This makes a total of 145 places where Catalan is taught.

In 1993, the Commission decided to make a study of the market: academic outline of universities with readers, position of Catalan in each university's study plan, and which universities could provide a Catalan teacher of their own, so that Catalan in the universities could take its place as the normal language of a normal country with the aim of increasing the number of doctorate readerships, research and post-graduate readerships, part-time readerships and Catalan/Castilian mixed readerships.

The Commission now has valuable information through the questionnaires to readers and tutors and the term reports and annual collective debates required of the readers. This information will help to choose the most suitable reader at each university and the most suitable type of readership.

We know, for example, that 8.5 % of

universities with readers have Catalan fully incorporated in the syllabus, in 22 % it is present to an acceptable degree, in 49.2 % it is minimally present and in 20.3 % it is absent. This is basically what we shall have to put right.

The Commission has also made headway in the understanding with the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the Directorate General for Cultural Co-operation, the Ambassadors and Cultural Attachés and the directorate and delegates of the Instituto Cervantes. This year the Commission has also been active in the Hispano-German Cultural Agreements, forming part of the Spanish delegation as observers.

We want to improve the situation of Catalan in university syllabuses and the role of the readers, who we want to see scientifically integrated. We want to contribute to improving the university offer and particularly foreign students' knowledge of the Catalan language, in a noble intent to contribute to a multicultural world. ■